

SEAN TURNELL TELLS OF MYANMAR JAIL SQUALOR, TORTURE FEAR

MIZZIMA EDITOR THAN HTIKE AUNG RELEASED FROM PRISON

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HUMANITARIAN CEASEFIRE

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MYANMAR JUNTA

LOCK THE LADY IN A BOX

Myanmar's democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi is being held by the military junta in a whitewashed concrete block without window blinds at a prison camp in a jungle clearing, according to one of the few people who have seen her since last year's coup.

Australian economist Sean Turnell, one of the foreign prisoners recently released by a junta amnesty, gave the Financial Times correspondent a glimpse into the living conditions of The Lady who carries the weight of several sentences and charges that could see the 77-year-old deposed leader incarcerated for the rest of her life.

Prior to Turnell's recent release and deportation, he conversed with Aung San Suu Kyi once a week before appearances at trials held in Naypyitaw. Now free and able to talk, he told the Financial Times' John Reed that the former leader was being held in stark conditions, cut off from the outside world, and blocked from official access to reading materials.

Earlier in her captivity she was allowed to have her dog and the help of assistants. Now, she is alone and the weight of her incarceration is likely to be telling, giving the stark conditions. From what little we know, she spends time meditating as she awaits the new rounds of trials, which are a farcical circus pursued by the Myanmar authorities.

One insight provided by Turnell on his Facebook page was his description of an incident that was, as he said, "so Daw Suu". As he recalls, Aung San Suu Kyi "was asked whether she wanted an air conditioner for the small structure in which she is kept (which, by the way, is nothing close to 'home-like' as claimed by Min Aung Hlaing). She replied - "only after every other cell in this prison has been given one".

As The Lady faces yet more charges and the potential to be incarcerated for life – the Myanmar generals attempting to keep her out of public life, throwing away the key – it is clear that her predicament reflects the condition of the Myanmar people.

EDITORIAL

mizzima
WEEKLY

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COVER PHOTO OF IDPS IN RAKHINE STATE BY AFP



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FREED JAPANESE JOURNALIST

Japanese documentary filmmaker and journalist Toru Kubota, who was detained in Myanmar on July and released on 17 November 2022, attends a news conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan (FCCJ) in Tokyo, Japan, 28 November. Kubota was arrested on 30 July 2022 in Myanmar while filming a small demonstration against the government in the capital Yangon. A Myanmar court sentenced him to three years in prison on charges of violating Myanmar's immigration law and Kubota faced a total of 10 years in prison in October. He was released on 17 November as part of a broad prisoner amnesty.

Photo: EPA

MAWLAMYINE-YANGON PASSENGER AIRLINE WILL RESTART OPERATIONS

Mawlamyine-Yangon passenger airline will restart operations. According to a Mawlamyine-based airline ticket agent, the Mawlamyine-Yangon passenger flight, which has been halted for more than two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, will restart operations on 5 December. Myanmar National Airlines (MNA) will begin operating the Mawlamyine-Yangon route beginning on 5 December. An

airline ticket agent based in Mawlamyine said: "The airline has been halted for a long time. The flight will operate twice a week. The cost of a flight ticket is approximately 140,000 kyats per ticket." According to an airline ticket agent, there is currently only the Mawlamyine-Yangon route and no separate Yangon-Mawlamyine route. If people need to travel to Mawlamyine from Yangon, they will have to take the Yangon- Kawthaung

-Mawlamyine route. "I think flying is the best option right now because of the country's current political situation," said a Mawlamyine resident.

The Nyaung Khar Shay X-Ray checkpoint at Sittaung Bridge is currently experiencing difficulties for people travelling by car, particularly emergency passengers, due to several days of travel delays and traffic congestion caused by strict inspections.

MYANMAR RESISTANCE FORCES KILL SEVEN SOLDIERS IN TANINTHARYI CHECKPOINT ATTACK

Myanmar resistance forces kill seven soldiers in Tanintharyi checkpoint attack

According to Myeik District Battalion (1), joint defense forces attacked a Military Council checkpoint in Hta-min-masar village, Palaw Township, Myeik District, Tanintharyi Region at 12:00 p.m. on 1 December and

seven junta soldiers were killed and four were injured in the exchange of fire.

An information officer from Myeik District Battalion (1) said: "The battle lasted nearly five hours. I saw many junta soldiers died and injured during the battle, and then all of the soldiers fled."

Following the battle, the local joint defense forces

launched a clearance operation in the villages of Hta-min-masar.

They then also disposed of the ashes of the bodies of Military Council soldiers and confiscated one rifle and five magazines. There are frequent clashes between Military Council troops and the joint People's Defense Forces in some villages in Palaw Township.

TWO INJURED IN MANDALAY WARD ADMINISTRATION OFFICE BOMBED

Two people including a ward administrator were injured when a bomb was detonated at the Thanlyat Maw East Ward Administration Office in Mandalay City, at about 1:00 p.m. on 3 December. According to the Special Task Force Mandalay (STF-MDY) guerrilla group its fighters detonated a bomb inside the Thanlyat Maw East Ward Administration Office

in Maha Aungmyay Township, when the administrator and other staff were having a meeting. A resident of Thanlyat Maw East Ward said: "It [the bomb] exploded inside the office. The Military Council-appointed ward administrator was hit and severely injured. I also heard that another person was injured." U San Win, the Ward Administrator, and a

member of staff were seriously injured and taken to hospital by ambulance. Following the explosion junta soldiers started searching and inspecting members of the public in the surrounding area. According to local media, at least five junta-appointed ward administrators have already been killed in Mandalay Region this year.

ONLINE PASSPORT APPLICATIONS TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

The About 80 junta soldiers entered Nyaung Hla Village in Sagaing Region's Tabayin Township and set it on fire on 3 December. An official from Tabayin Township Internally Displaced Person's (IDP) Support Organisation, a local civil society organisation (CSO) said: "At around 11:00 a.m., a military council column set fire to Nyaung Hla Village.

They continued setting fire to the village until evening (around 5:00 p.m.). The villagers

fled for their lives." An official from the Tabayin Township Brothers Force, a local people's defence force (PDF) said: "They [junta troops] set fire to Nyaung Hla Village. Now all we can do is wait to see how many more villages they will burn down.

The villagers cannot do anything about it, they just have to flee for their lives. The junta troops will have to pay for their terrorist actions." The junta troops set fire to more than 54 houses and seven buildings in a

monastery compound, in Nyaung Hla Village, according to data released by Tabayin Township IDP Support Organisation. On the following day, 4 December, also in Tabayin Township, junta troops set fire to the villages of Namyar, Yinkyay, and Mayoekone. Because of the actions of junta troops many inhabitants of 10 villages in Tabayin Township have been forced to flee their homes, according to the Tabayin Township IDP Support Organisation.

100 SHELTERS BEING BUILT FOR SAGAING FAMILIES WHOSE HOUSES WERE BURNED DOWN

100 temporary shelters for people whose homes were burned down by junta troops are being built by S&C, a local civil society organisation (SCO), in Sagaing Region's Tabayin Township. The shelters will cost 200,000 kyats each.

The population of Tabayin Township is approximately 2,000 and 566 households had their

homes torched and destroyed or damaged by junta forces. Soe Moe Aung, a representative of S&C said: "At the moment, we can only build 100 houses for the most vulnerable people among the 566 fire-affected households. I would like to ask people to support and donate as much as they can for those who have been displaced."


He said that junta soldiers had launched an offensive in Tabayin Township on 5 December and set fire to five villages: Inpin, Konetae, Ohn Gar, Thiton, and Banbwe. This resulted in 1,000 people being displaced and having to move to one of 10 internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Tabayin Township run by S&C and other local CSOs.

HUMANITARIAN CEASEFIRE

A well-earned respite for war-weary Arakan Army and the Myanmar junta but how long will it last?

It surprised everybody when news of ceasefire between the Myanmar military junta and United League of Arakan/Arakan Army (ULA/AA) was suddenly made public last week, as the war of words to match the fighting on the ground have been in heightening, prompting concern about escalation rather than de-escalation.

SAI WANSAI



Rohingya IDPs living in a camp in Rakhine State. Photo: AFP

AA Spokesman Khaing Thuka said that since 24 November, there were no more armed engagement between the AA and the Myanmar military junta, according to three local media houses.

On 26 November, concerning the ceasefire, AA Spokesman Khaing Thuka told



Narinjara News: “There is no agreement in writing. It means only that both sides will stop within 24 hours in areas they’ve presently reached or located. Within 24 hours means until tomorrow morning, all fighting will be stopped.”

“Mainly, we aim to resolve the difficulties and crises that the people of Rakhine are currently facing, and carry out a humanitarian ceasefire arrangement. At the moment, the harvesting time for the main food supply has arrived, so we seriously thought of it for the people to carry out a humanitarian ceasefire,” he added.

He claimed that the AA’s political positions had not changed, saying: “Despite the current ceasefire, our political position will not change. It will remain as it was originally.”

Regarding the ceasefire between the AA and the Military Council, U Pe Than, a former member of the Pyithu Hluttaw of Myebon Township, said: “I see the ceasefire as a good sign at the moment. I am talking about the present situation. Because the villagers and the people are suffering a lot. The Military Council is firing heavy weapons into the villages and people are being killed and injured every day. Another thing is that they have cut off food supplies and medicines. Civilians have been arrested. They are doing a lot of investigations and interrogations of the people. They are also putting them in jail and so on. The people are suffering a lot from the negative impact of this war. Thus, if the ceasefire is genuine the fighting will cease, the situation will gradually improve and the people will be able to breath easily.”

U Oo Hla Saw, a leading member of the United League of Arakan (ULA), said that it is good to make military and political decisions only after solving the problems of the people, according to the RFA recent report.

He said: “As the people are not directly involved in the fighting, the stopping of armed engagement is a welcome aspect either from a religious or social point of view. The political problems can be resolved later and even (resume) fighting each other again. The people of Rakhine will be happy if the restrictions that have been blocked or restricted will be opened, and they will breathe a little easier.”

In the same RFA report, U Pe Than said that it could be that the ULA/AA cannot bear to see the hardship and tragedy of the Arakan people and had agreed to the ceasefire arrangement.

U Pe Than said that the junta is like the demon in mythology who doesn’t care that a child will be hurt by pulling it mercilessly with intention to cause damage. But the ULA/AA is like a real mother who has the heart of tender mother and let go for she can’t bear to hear the suffering sound of her child.

“In this sense at the moment, I see that ULA/AA has taken into consideration the voices of the people and given priority to the voices of those who are in trouble and crying,” he said.

U Pe Than also said that the ceasefire has given the Military Council, which is under military pressure, a breather.

In Rakhine State, the junta’s army and the Rakhine Army (AA) fought for more

than four months and in these four months, 33 local people were killed and 79 injured, according to the RFA report.

Meanwhile, the junta has allowed some waterways to operate which were closed for months after the recent ceasefire agreement.

An official of the Shwe Pyitan Line told Western News: "At the moment, we are allowed to operate by sea, but we are allowed to operate to Rathedaung and Buthidaung. We have not yet received permission to operate to Mrauk U, Pauktaw, and Minbya."

It is not yet known whether Ann Township's Dalet River group will be allowed to operate and also whether the waterways going to the Palatwa side of Chin State will be reopened.

Mediators

Mr. Sasakawa, the Japanese government's special representative for national reconciliation, is in Myanmar and there are reports that he is mediating between the AA and the Military Council Army, but it has not been confirmed yet, according to recent RFA report.

But an insider source with deep knowledge of Myanmar's peace process, as participant and observer, quoting news coming from UN Dhaka said that Sasakawa initiated the mediation since starting back in 1 November. Reportedly, he was in Burma since 25 November and his assistant Yuji Mori since 23 November, according to one of the media reports.

The same source said that the ceasefire is conditional in that the humanitarian needs of the people must be addressed to allow the

transport of rice, medicine and other needy supplies to flow; stop arbitrary arrests of the people; and allow ULA courts to operate without interference by the junta.

In addition, the source said no statements will be released out of respect to alliance partners and friends such as the National Unity Government (NUG), as AA does not want alliance members to become frustrated and also it doesn't believe it will hold much longer.

The rationale of it is a humanitarian ceasefire, as this is the harvest time which is very important to the citizens. However, this season harvest yield will be very low – seeing a 30 percent drop - due to the lack of water and inability to plant.

The two sides, AA and junta, have been holding talks quietly for some time. Also, the Rakhine political parties had held virtual meetings with AA leader Twan Mrat Naing and his deputy Nyo Twan Aung. The politicians told them if they kept on fighting, no matter who wins, the Rakhine people will be the losers, the insider source said.

According to a recent Myanmar Now report, AA spokesman Khaing Thukha said that the ceasefire was agreed upon through intermediaries, but did not reveal the name of the organizations involved.

But on 28 November, he confirmed in a virtual press conference: "Some intermediaries have stepped in and tried to work (on a ceasefire). Frankly speaking, we can say this matter came about with the mediation of the Nippon Foundation Chairman Mr Sasakawa."

On 25 November, Hideo Watanabe, president of the Japan-Myanmar Friendship Association, visited Naypyitaw and held a meeting with the deputy coup leader.

In commemoration of the recent National Day, hundreds of people were awarded honorary credentials by the Military Council, along with some Russian military figures, including the president of the Japan-Myanmar Friendship Association, Hideo Watanabe, who was awarded the title of Thiri Pyanchi.

On the same day as the president of the Japan-Myanmar Friendship Association, the Director General of the Border Guard Force of Bangladesh and



the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar also arrived in Naypyitaw and held a meeting with the Military Council officials.

“Right now, the informal ceasefire means that if the ceasefire is confirmed, we must continue to negotiate for the release of the people who have been arrested and not to arrest the people. Since there are arbitrary killings, shootings with heavy weapons and such things, we consider for the people first, and then take informal humanitarian action. There will be no time limit and it will depend on the compliance of both sides. An informal ceasefire depends mainly on compliance by both sides. We have negotiated

through intermediaries,” AA spokesperson Khaing Thukha said, according to the Western News.

Analysis

Given such a political development, it is highly unlikely that durable ceasefire will stick. The free flow of humanitarian aid cargo; stopping arbitrary arrests of the people, including the release of those detained; and allowing ULA courts to operate without interference by the junta will not be an easy task for the junta to accommodate, especially the last conditional demand of ceasefire.

Another thing is it will all depend on how the opposing troops operate and behave

on the ground, and given the unruly and undisciplined nature of the junta’s troops, it will prove to be a daunting task.

But for the time being it can be taken as a win-win situation as both parties need a respite, especially the junta as it has to fight almost all over the country against ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) or ethnic resistance organizations (EROs), people’s defence forces (PDFs) and assorted local defence forces (LDFs).

However, the Arakan people will definitely welcome such a humanitarian ceasefire pause, even if the prospect of durable peace may be hard to achieve.

Sai Wansai for Mizzima



Arakan Army and its leader on parade.
Photo: AA

SEAN TURNELL TELLS OF MYANMAR JAIL SQUALOR, TORTURE FEAR

An Australian economist released after nearly two years in a Myanmar jail has told of interrogations in leg irons, squalor and the sounds of screams from tortured cellmates during his time behind bars.

Sean Turnell, who returned home to Sydney after being released as part of an amnesty of almost 6,000 prisoners, gave the first public details of his incarceration in an interview with The Australian newspaper. The former adviser to deposed Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi was detained by the military in February 2021 shortly after its forces seized control of the country.

Turnell told the paper in an interview published in the newspaper that he was initially kept at Yangon's Insein prison in a six metre by 2.5 metre concrete cell in which an iron chair with leg irons had been bolted to the floor.

He then endured two months of interrogations, the paper said, sometimes being taken from his bed to be locked in the irons. Officials accused him of working for British intelligence and gun-running, and quizzed him about his work for Suu Kyi, the economist was quoted as saying.

He told the paper on Monday that he had been infected with Covid-19 five times and kept in solitary confinement for months. In the early days of his confinement, Turnell said he could hear the sounds of people outside banging pots and pans at night in protest against the military coup. "Then came the explosions and gunfire and people being tortured in rooms nearby. I thought, they're not going to do that to me surely? Then after a while, I started thinking, maybe they will. I think they wanted me to hear it."

'Ate out of a bucket' Turnell said he had expected to be treated "with kid gloves".

"They didn't stick electrodes to me, but I was thrown into filthy cells. The food they used to deliver to me (came) in a bucket. For 650 days, I ate out of a bucket."

In the Naypyidaw detention centre, to which he was later transferred, "it wasn't even a new bucket, they were paint buckets", he said.

"They didn't beat me, but they did push and shove me." In Naypyidaw, prisoners were locked away for 20 hours a day, Turnell said.

"In the monsoon, the roof would leak and we would sit there all night sometimes with water just pouring down through the roof, clutching your clothes and blanket to try to keep them dry," he said.

Turnell said his wife, Ha Vu, an economist at Australia's Macquarie University, helped him survive with phone chats and by regularly sending books, cookies and cake through the Australian embassy. The economist was sentenced in September to three years' imprisonment for breaching Myanmar's Official Secrets Act - charges he denied - before being released in the amnesty along with former British ambassador Vicky Bowman and Japanese journalist Toru Kubota.

AFP



Sean Turnell with his wife Ha Vu shortly after his release - prior to a shave. Photo: Ha Vu/Facebook

MIZZIMA EDITOR THAN HTIKE AUNG RELEASED FROM PRISON



Mizzima editor Than Htike Aung, who was arrested while working as a journalist and then imprisoned, has been released under an amnesty on the 17 November from Yamethin Prison, Mandalay Region.

He was arrested by plainclothes junta troops on 19 March 2021, while he was outside Dakkhin Thiri court in Nay Pyi Taw covering the court case of the National League for Democracy (NLD) official Win Htein. He was arrested together with BBC Burmese correspondent Aung Thura, who was released on 22 March last year.

After his arrest, he was tortured during his six-day interrogation.

He was sentenced to two years in prison by the military junta under Section 505 (a) of the penal code on 22 March this year and he was transferred to Yamethin Prison.

Two other Mizzima journalists

are still in prison.

Moreover, a father, an uncle and a brother of another Mizzima journalist were also arrested in 2021. The uncle and the father were released about a month after their arrests. But the brother of that Mizzima journalist is still in prison. 5,774 prisoners including four foreigners were also released from prison under an amnesty marking the National Day of Myanmar.

The four foreign prisoners who were released are Sean Turnell, Australian economist and former adviser to detained leader Aung San Suu Kyi, former British ambassador Vicky Bowman, US citizen Kyaw Htay Oo and Japanese filmmaker Toru Kubota. The foreigners were immediately deported.

Kyaw Tint Swe, former Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor of the ousted NLD-led government, Than Htay, a member of the Union Election Commission,

and former Chief Minister of Tanintharyi Region Dr Lae Lae Maw, who was imprisoned by NLD-led government for corruption, were also released from prisons under the amnesty. The junta announced that those released were freed on “on the grounds of humanitarianism”.

The junta’s statement did not use the phrase “political prisoners”. The statement also said that the prisoners were released on the condition that if a released prisoner commits another crime again, he/she must serve the current remaining punishments which now have been pardoned, plus the future punishments for the new crimes.

Aung Myo Min, Union Minister for Human Rights in the exiled National Unity Government, said that the reason why the junta released some political prisoners is just to polish the junta’s own election process, and “there is not a drop of gratitude [towards the junta]”.

Before this amnesty, VOA (Voice of America) reported last month that 159 journalists had been arrested following the 2021 coup and at least 59 were still in custody.

YANGON JOURNALIST SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS PRISON BY MYANMAR JUNTA



Journalist Ah Hla Lay Thuzar, also known as Thuzar, was sentenced to two years in prison by Insein special court for “causing fear, spreading false news and agitating crimes against a government employee” under Section 505 (a) of the penal code, on 22 November.

She was arrested at Pyi Yeik Mon Housing in Yangon City’s Kamayut Township on 1 September 2021 and held in pre-trial detention for 15 months under Section 505 (a) of the Penal Code.

A close friend of hers said: “I thought she had been released as part of the National day amnesty [on 17 November]. Some other journalists were released on that day, but not her. They have now sentenced her to two years in prison. This is an unjust conviction. I don’t think journalism is a crime.”

Ah Hla Lay Thuzar had been working as a journalist for nearly 15 years and her work has appeared in the Modern Journal, RFA News, 7 Days News Media, and Friday Time, amongst

others.

Since the February 2021 coup she had been working as a freelance reporter for the Friday Time Journal and the MPA, according to local media reports.

She had continued working as a journalist after the coup but had been in hiding from May 2021 until her arrest in September of that year.

According to the Reporters Without Borders’ Press Freedom Barometer, 135 journalists have been arrested in Myanmar since the military coup and 52 media workers are currently still being held in Myanmar’s prisons.

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NUG ACTING PRESIDENT SPEAKS OUT AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The National Unity Government (NUG) Acting President Duwa Lashi La has given a speech in support of a United Nations effort involving 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

In a speech made on 25 November, Duwa Lashi La had the following to say:

This is an event to launch 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. The National Unity Government of Myanmar is glad to participate in this United Nations effort, and to unite with responsible governments and activists from across the world who are dedicating their effort to the vital task of eliminating violence against women and girls.

The International Theme for this year's 16 days of activism is "UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls".

As President of the National Unity Government, I speak today for more than 16 months of such violence, perpetrated against the women, children and all people of Myanmar. Let me tell your first why this responsibility to eradicate the scourge of gender-based violence matters so much for the people of Myanmar. The State Administration Council or SAC formed by Myanmar's military after their unlawful coup of 1st February 2022 is a criminal

enterprise. It discounts the will of the people and instead uses its power to attack them. It neglects the people's needs and ignores their fundamental rights. People across Myanmar, from all ethnicities, faiths, ages and genders, are suffering now at the hands of this toxic regime.

We have a deep concern for the thousands of pregnant women who have been forced to give birth on the run, in the jungle, in abandoned villages and with little or no assistance. With minimal access to obstetric care, the numbers of women and children dying in childbirth has increased, and immunisations for children have virtually ceased. This will result in thousands of children at risk of death from preventable disease.



NUG Acting President
Duwa Lashi La

Women are losing their lives by direct violence, and also by this neglect. This deliberate campaign of rape and murder must be stopped. In fear for their lives, over one million people have been forced to flee their homes and seek shelter in Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps, many of which have been hastily constructed and have barely enough supplies to support basic needs.

The majority of IDPs are women, young people and children.

The National Unity Government has adopted a women and human-rights based approach in all our efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls by adopting the Code of Conducts, Policy on Protection Against Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA) and Women, Peace and Security Framework. These policies and guidelines are informing our work across NUG ministries, including the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs. We are proud that we are the first government in the history of my country to create such a ministry, as a clear sign of our commitment to hear and respond to the needs of women.

The role of any true government is to ensure that people live their lives protected by fundamental human rights. This is the necessary

pre-condition for human flourishing. The National Unity Government provided financial aid to 50,000 pregnant women in conflict area in 2021 and 45,000 pregnant women until mid-year of 2022. Our humanitarian aid reached millions of women and children which are medicines, warm clothes and basic food. Our mission also reached the survivors of sexual violence committed by the military force. We have received 120 sexual violence cases and this is a high number since the 2021 military coup.

In this regard, real change will only come when the international community, including the United Nations, takes effective action to stop this terrorist military from perpetrating atrocities.

We call for an immediate and effective arms embargo to stop those

countries who are providing the weapons that enable the Myanmar military to carve this blood-soaked path through our women and our children.

Right now, the National Unity Government is hard at work to mitigate the harms caused by this violence. We are working across our various ministries to enable victims to become survivors, and survivors to become victors. We provide shelter and protection, psycho-social support and medical care to those in our care. This is what a true government does.

And we therefore urge every organisation and individual to join forces to prevent and end violence perpetrated against women and girls.

To this end, I commit the National Unity Government to use these sixteen days of activism against gender-based violence to a programme to hear and amplify the voices of Myanmar women whose voices have been silenced by violence through our history. We will be in the refugee camps, on the borders, in the spaces where women have fled for their safety.

Please do not forget Myanmar. Help us now in our fight for freedom. Violence is not acceptable. Join me and my people in saying no to the violence as the International Theme for this year's 16 days activism is "UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls".

REMEMBERING 300 WOMEN AND GIRLS KILLED BY THE MYANMAR COUP

On 25 November, the United Nations (UN) International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, civil society organisation (CSO) Free Expression Myanmar (FEM) calls on people to remember the more than 300 women and girls whose voices have been killed by the coup.

According to FEM the killed women included students, protesters, teachers, nurses, public officials, nuns, civil society workers, political activists, shop workers, human rights defenders, resistance fighters, and labourers.

Striking nurse Zarli Naing and striking teacher Khin Hnin Wai were captured in Magway, killed, and burned by the military in June 2022. Their voices and their potential to improve Myanmar are forever gone.

58 of those killed were children still developing their own opinions and voices. 30 girls were killed under the age of 12, and at least 12 girls had never even been to school before dying.

Two-year-old Shwe Yoon Eain died in a Rakhine prison in February 2022, denied medical treatment while accompanying her mother detained as a “terrorist”. None of these deaths was “accidental” and all were either intentional or due to extreme negligence.

Many were killed for their heroic acts of bravery in defying the military through protests and expressions of dissent.

At least 111 were shot and killed, many while protesting against the coup and others while protecting

the protesters. Nurse Thinzar Hein was shot in the head while attending to the wounded at a Sagaing protest in March 2021. At least 40 were killed while being held in detention by the military. 20 were burned alive.

In many cases, violence against women is gender-based violence targeted at their womanhood.

At least 17 women and girls were reportedly raped and killed. 14-year-old Moe Moe Htwe was raped and burned alive by the military in Magway in April 2022. CDM striking public official Htet Nay Chi Min was reportedly raped and killed in Sagaing in February 2022. Many, many more have been subjected to sexual violence, the real scale of which remains unknown.

“International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women” was adopted in 2000 by the UN General Assembly under resolution 54/134. Violence includes physical, sexual, and psychological harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

The CSO the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) has recorded the names of the women and girls killed during the coup.



TWO COMMIT SUICIDE FOLLOWING MYANMAR JUNTA EVICTIONS



Photo: Mizzima

Two people committed suicide after the junta evicted them with a week's notice from their houses in Pyinmapin Industrial Zone in Yangon's Mingaladon Township.

The body of a man who had hanged himself was found at his house in Myawaddy Ward on 18 November and on 21 November the body of a woman who had also hanged herself was found at her house in Myae Myan Aung Ward.

According to reports, after both incidents junta troops came to investigate the deaths. A local resident said: "Two people hanged themselves. One was from Myawaddy Ward and the other

was from Myae Myan Aung Ward. They hanged themselves because they were facing too much pressure."

Pyinmapin residents explained that many of the houses in the Pyinmapin Industrial Zone are nice, big houses that were built and paid for by the people living there who were living there legally and not squatting. Some of the residents had apparently spent up to 120 million kyats on building their houses.

Following the eviction notices, some residents removed everything of value that they could from their houses and then destroyed what was left to prevent the junta from profiting from their

evictions in any way. The junta has been destroying the other vacated houses that have not been destroyed by their owners.

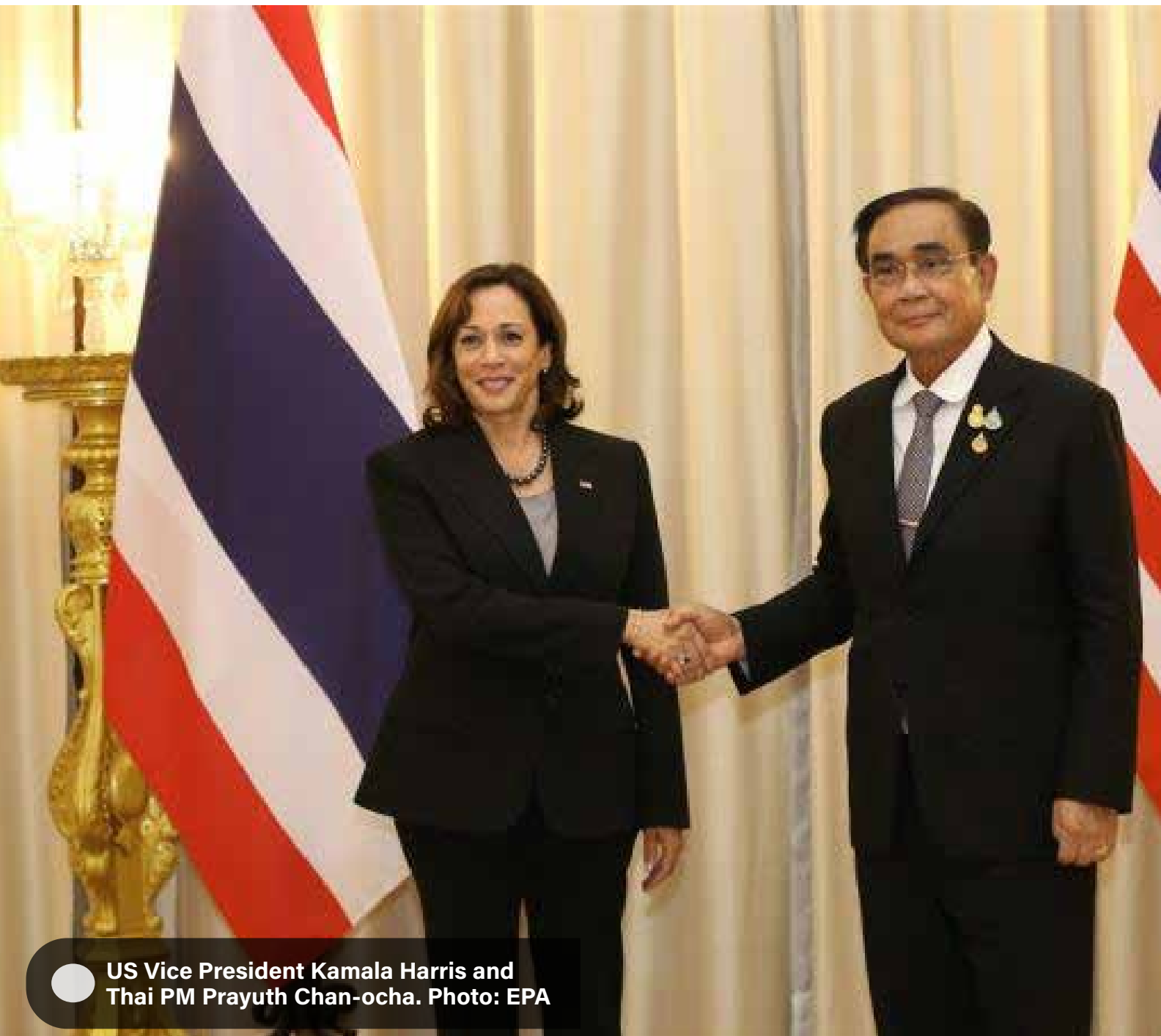
Approximately 10,000 households from five wards in the area of the Pyinmapin Industrial Zone were told that their homes had been illegally constructed and that they were illegal squatters. On 10 and 11 November, they were served with eviction orders saying that they had to vacate their properties by 18 November.

The residents of a monastery, a nunnery and other religious buildings within the Pyinmapin Industrial Zone were also evicted.

US AND THAILAND TO EXPAND BILATERAL COOPERATION

Following the visit of US Vice-President Kamala Harris to Thailand last month the White House announced a set of new initiatives that Thailand and the US will implement. A White House briefing said that Thailand and the US are “expanding our bilateral cooperation on areas such as the climate crisis and

economic development by accelerating the clean energy transition, building climate resilience, and promoting sustainable development.” The full text of the briefing below goes into more details as to how this will be achieved: The United States and Thailand reaffirm our shared interest in a prosperous and resilient Southeast Asia.



US Vice President Kamala Harris and Thai PM Prayuth Chan-ocha. Photo: EPA

We are pursuing sustainable, climate-focused economic goals via the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and the Bio-Circular-Green Economy model, and we are strengthening our economic ties, including through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). In a demonstration of the United States' enduring

commitment to Thailand, the Mekong Region, and Southeast Asia more broadly, the Vice President is launching the following initiatives. Addressing the Climate Crisis and Accelerating Clean Energy Transition.

The United States and Thailand are committed to continuing to play leading roles in addressing the climate crisis as we raise our climate ambitions to reach our net-zero targets and unlock economic growth. Together we are working to reduce emissions and enhance climate adaptation and resilience.

Through IPEF and the Japan-U.S.-Mekong Power Partnership, the United States and Thailand will expand investment opportunities, spur innovation, and improve the livelihood of citizens. The United States will provide technical assistance on carbon capture, utilization and storage to support Thailand's development of its legal and regulatory framework, as well as attract private investment.

Net Zero World Initiative: The United States welcomes Thailand joining the Net Zero World Initiative, a U.S.-led program launched at COP26 to leverage U.S. government expertise, philanthropy, and partner countries to accelerate the transition to net zero emission energy systems. Together, we will promote cooperation in

electric vehicles, solar energy and energy efficiency, to help Thailand meet its future energy demands.

FIRST Program Partnership: The Vice President is launching a new clean energy partnership with Thailand to build capacity for the secure and safe deployment of advanced nuclear reactor technologies under the U.S. Foundational Infrastructure for Responsible Use of Small Modular Reactor Technology (FIRST) Program.

This partnership builds on almost 50 years of U.S.-Thailand civil nuclear cooperation. The FIRST program will work with experts from government, academia, industry, and national laboratories to explore options to advance Thailand's goal of Net Zero Emissions by 2065 through deployment of small modular reactors (SMRs) under the highest standards of safety, security and nonproliferation.

This partnership will help Thailand take advantage of the unique benefits of SMRs that provide 24/7 reliable power, complement other clean energy sources, use a small land footprint, and incorporate advanced safety features. Cooperation under FIRST will also deepen strategic ties, support clean energy innovation, and advance technical collaboration between the two countries.



Assisting Agriculture in Climate-Smart Decisions: The United States will provide \$22.5 million toward Food for Progress, which will work with the government of Thailand and its farmers to develop a Regional Climate Hub. The Hub will build the capacity of private and public sector partners to understand, promote, and market climate-smart innovations and associated services. The project will reach 30,000 individuals and improve management practices on 24,000 hectares.

YSEALI Enviro-Tech Regional Workshop: Our people-to-people ties are exemplified by the over 30,000 Thai alumni that have participated in a U.S. government-funded or facilitated exchanges including the Fulbright program, International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), and other U.S. government exchange programs. YSEALI boasts leaders in areas vital to the future of the U.S.-Thai relationship: education, democracy, economic development, and more. To further enhance these ties, the United States will fund the YSEALI Enviro-Tech Regional Workshop, which seeks to train young people on climate change mitigation and

adaptation, including the use of emerging technology, such as AI, clean energy, and biotech, to address environmental challenges in the Mekong sub-region. Creating Climate-Smart Infrastructure, Enhancing Environmental Protection, and Securing Supply Chains: The U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) announced more than \$2 million in new commitments to support climate-smart infrastructure, environmental protection, and secure supply chains in Thailand. These new commitments include a grant to Thailand's Ministry of Transport that will leverage over \$2 billion to strengthen Thailand's transportation and freight logistics capacity. This project will enhance supply chain networks through

key domestic and regional transportation corridors and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, furthering Thailand's transportation infrastructure and climate goals. USTDA also announced support for a plastic recycling facility that will strengthen Thailand's waste management efforts and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This project will advance Thailand's Bio-Circular-Green economic model for inclusive and sustainable growth. These efforts build on USTDA's ongoing work to partner with the private sector to increase technical support for electric vehicles and battery storage.

S t r e n g t h e n i n g
Bilateral Cooperation and Economic Development: Telecommunications, Global Health, Cybersecurity, and Trafficking in Persons

Supporting Enhanced 5G Security: The U.S. Telecommunications Training Institute plans to host a regional workshop in Thailand on connectivity and 5G applications. The workshop will bring international experts to Thailand to advise policy makers on how to deploy next generation information communications technologies efficiently and securely. USTDA will also host a 5G Ecosystem Reverse Trade Mission to familiarize senior Thai officials and business executives with U.S. technologies and use

cases for 5G wireless networks with the goal of accelerating Thailand's 5G rollout.

World Class Oncology Center: The U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) will provide nearly \$600,000 to support a new oncology center located in Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor within Chonburi Province, Thailand. USTDA will help develop a master planning document for the oncology center buildout, ranging from economic and financial fundamentals to a detailed equipment list and staffing requirements. The project will advance Thailand's goal of providing access to world-class cancer treatment to hundreds of thousands of people across the Lower Mekong Region.

Bolstering the Resilience of Critical Information Networks: The U.S. Department of State will continue to provide capacity building and technical assistance to the National Cybersecurity Agency (NCSA). This assistance will include further support for the National Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT), assistance in developing a Cyber Incident Response Plan, and support for the National Coordination Center. We plan to partner with NCSA to support private sector efforts to develop new sectoral CERTs for key critical infrastructure sectors. These efforts will

help Thailand develop a more secure and resilient cyber ecosystem.

Supporting Cybersecurity Collaboration with Private Sector Stakeholders: The U.S. Department of State will partner with Thailand's NCSA to host a table-top exercise bringing together cybersecurity experts, national security policy makers, and business executives to facilitate contingency planning for potential future cybersecurity threats. The exercise will both help identify areas where further investment may be necessary and build bridges between cybersecurity policy makers and business executives from Critical Information Infrastructure sectors.

Collaborating to Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP): The United States and Thailand are committed to eliminating human trafficking. The United States acknowledges the increasing efforts Thailand has made to combat trafficking, resulting in a Tier 2 ranking in the 2022 TIP Report. The United States will continue to work with Thailand to elevate counter-trafficking efforts. Through a grant from the State Department, the International Justice Mission is assisting Thailand's efforts to protect victims of human trafficking by helping to train frontline officials on implementing Thailand's human trafficking laws, including those on forced labor.

Establishing a Cybercrime Mentoring Program: The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will establish a 90-day Temporary Duty assignment for Cyber Special Agents to work with the Royal Thai Police's (RTP) Cyber Crime Investigation Bureau. This will provide mentorship and assessment of cyber investigation capabilities, cybersecurity, and cyber forensic needs.

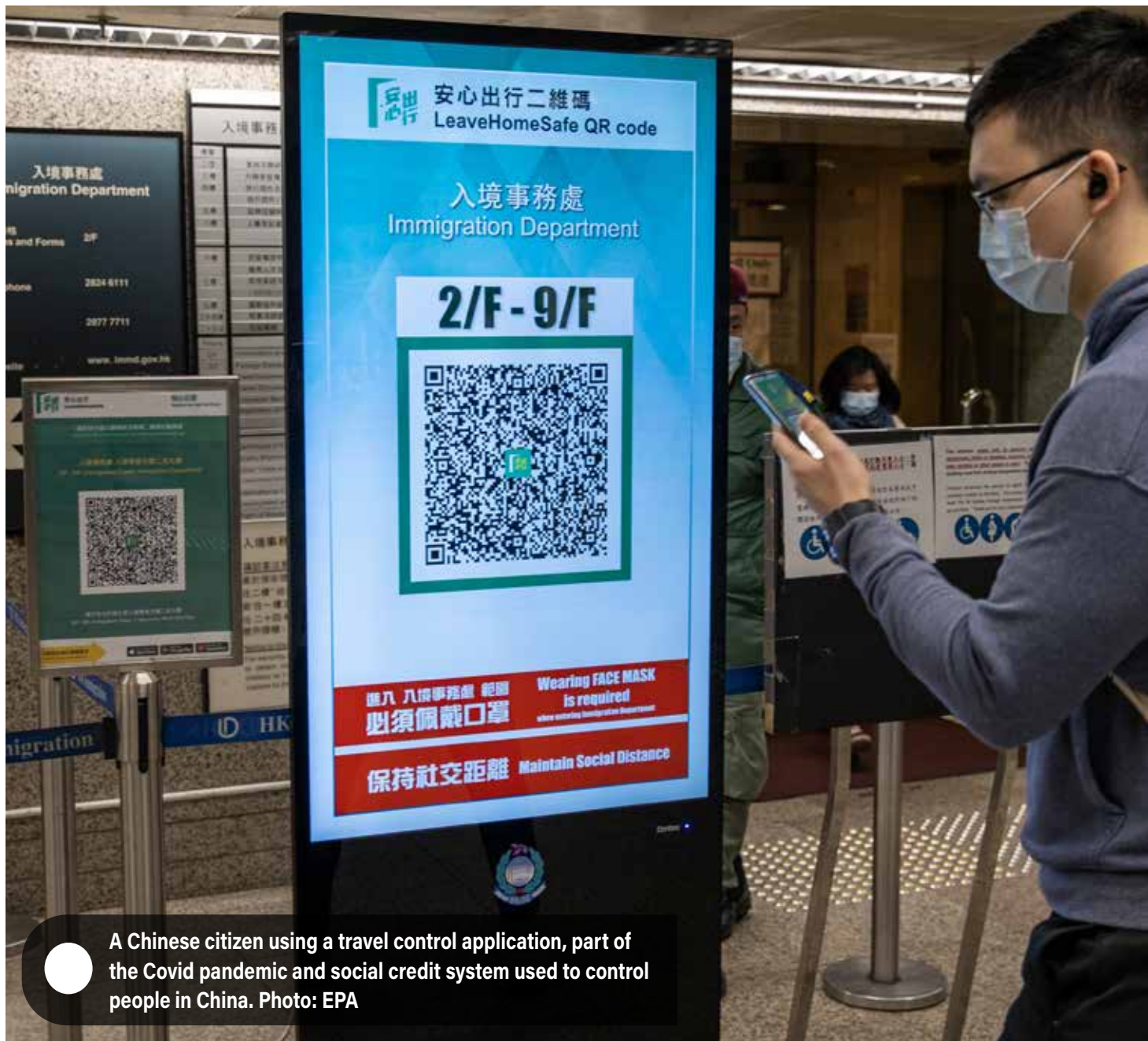
CHINA FACES SOARING COVID CASES AS HARDLINE POLICY EASES

Covid cases are surging in the Chinese capital, officials said Monday, as the country navigates a rapid turn away from its zero-tolerance coronavirus strategy.

Just a few days after China began loosening restrictions, Beijing authorities said more than 22,000 patients had visited hospitals across the city in the previous day - 16 times the number a week ago.

"The current trend of the rapid spread of the epidemic in Beijing still exists," said city health commission spokesman Li Ang at a briefing Monday.

"The number of fever clinic visits and flu-like cases increased significantly, and the number of emergency calls increased sharply."



A Chinese citizen using a travel control application, part of the Covid pandemic and social credit system used to control people in China. Photo: EPA

China reported 8,626 domestic infections Monday but with testing no longer mandatory for much of the population the number is believed to be a lot higher. As the country steers a tricky path out of its zero-Covid policy towards living with the virus, many with symptoms have opted to self-medicate at home. Cold and fever medicines have sold out in virtually all pharmacies across Beijing, and rapid antigen tests are dwindling as people stock

up in anticipation of a virus surge that threatens the lives of millions of unvaccinated elderly. Social media users reported a surge of infections in smaller cities including Baoding in Hebei province and Dazhou in Sichuan, with hospitals inundated and residents unable to buy medicines.

AFP was not immediately able to verify the claims. "It's really serious, the supply of medicine is not enough and it's being managed badly," wrote one person on the Twitter-like platform Weibo. Lacking adequate medical infrastructure and primary care triage, China's rural interior is particularly vulnerable to health crises such as Covid.

'End of an era'

In a major move towards unwinding years of hardline restrictions, China said Monday it would retire an app used to track travel to areas with infections. The state-run "Communications Itinerary Card" was a central part of zero-Covid, keeping tabs on the movements of millions through their phone signal data.

It was one of a panoply of tracking apps that have governed everyday life through the pandemic. Most people still use local "health codes" run by their city or province to enter shops and offices.

Social media users hailed the retirement of the software, noting the symbolism of the government shutting down its main tracking app.

"Bye bye, this announces the end of an era, and also welcomes a brand new one," one person wrote on Weibo.

Others asked what would become of the mountains of data collected and hoped it would be deleted.

'Spreading rapidly'

Kendra Schaefer, tech partner at research consultancy Trivium China, said the "political win of returning to normalcy is ginormous".

But that normalcy means the country faces a surge of cases it is ill-prepared to handle, with millions of elderly not fully vaccinated and underfunded hospitals lacking capacity to take on huge numbers of patients.

China has one intensive care unit bed per 10,000 people, Jiao Yahui, director of the Department of Medical Affairs at the National Health Commission, warned last week. The official number of Covid cases has dropped sharply from an all-time high recorded last month, but top Chinese health expert Zhong Nanshan warned in state media Sunday that the Omicron variant was "spreading rapidly".

The easing of restrictions has also released pent-up demand for domestic travel, with state broadcaster CCTV saying Monday that flights from Beijing's two main airports were expected to soon return to 70 percent of 2019 levels.

AFP



CHINA SENDS RECORD WAVE OF BOMBERS INTO TAIWAN DEFENCE ZONE

China sent a record 18 nuclear-capable bombers into Taiwan's air defence zone, Taipei said Tuesday, just days after Beijing banned more Taiwanese imports in the latest sign of deteriorating ties.

Democratic Taiwan lives under the constant threat of invasion by China, which sees the self-ruled island as part of its territory to be seized one day.

Beijing has ramped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure since the 2016 election of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who rejects its stance that the island is part of China.

In a daily update on Tuesday morning Taiwan's defence ministry said 21 aircraft entered the island's southwest air defence identification zone (ADIZ) over the last 24 hours, including 18 nuclear-capable H-6 bombers.

That represents by far the largest daily sortie by H-6 bombers since Taipei first began releasing daily incursion data in September 2020, according to a database maintained by AFP.



People hold A4 paper in a demonstration in Taiwan in solidarity with the protestors in mainland China against controls and in favour of democracy. Photo: EPA



The wave came after China slapped fresh import bans on Taiwanese food, beverages, alcohol and fishery products last week, prompting Premier Su Tseng-chang to accuse Beijing of violating international trade rules and “discriminating” against the island.

The H-6 is China’s main long distance bomber and is able to carry nuclear payloads.

It is rare for China to send more than five H-6 bombers in one day. But sorties have increased dramatically in recent weeks.

Until recently October 2021 was the month with the largest number of H-6 flights on record at 16.

But last month China sent 21 of the bombers into Taiwan’s ADIZ. And the current tally for December stands at 23.

Many nations maintain air defence identification zones (ADIZ), including the United States, Canada, South Korea, Japan and China. They are not the same as a country’s airspace.

Instead, they encompass a much wider area, in which any foreign aircraft is expected to announce itself to local aviation authorities.

Taiwan’s ADIZ is much larger than its airspace. It overlaps with part of China’s ADIZ and even includes some of the mainland.

AFP

HONG KONG CARDINAL AMONG ACTIVISTS CONVICTED OVER PROTEST FUND

A 90-year-old Hong Kong cardinal was among six dissidents convicted on Friday over their running of a multi-million-dollar defence fund for arrested anti-government protesters.

Five of the group were fined HK\$4,000 (US\$500) for the crime of failing to properly register the fund as a society,

while a sixth got a smaller fine.

Cardinal Joseph Zen, one of Asia's highest-ranking Catholics, is among the scores of veteran activists facing legal threats as China stamps out protest in the former British colony.

The six were arrested under sweeping national

security legislation that Beijing imposed in 2020, a year after the outbreak of huge and often violent protests.

They are yet to face charges under that law, which can carry a sentence of up to life in jail. Among Zen's co-convicted on Friday were activist and singer Denise Ho, and veteran human rights



● Cardinal Zen in Hong Kong. Photo; EPA

barrister Margaret Ng.

All had pleaded not guilty, setting up a two-month trial.

On Friday, magistrate Ada Yim found “the only and irresistible inference” was that the fund was a “local society” and so subject to the rules.

“Considering the social and political events in recent years, if a society has connections with political groups... the society’s operations may affect public order, public peace and national security,” Yim said.

Speaking outside the court, Ng said it was the first time anyone had been convicted for failing to register a society, adding that it was “extremely important in relation to the freedom of association in Hong Kong”.

Cardinal Zen’s arrest earlier this year, for “colluding with foreign forces”, shocked the city’s Catholic community and renewed criticism of the Vatican’s warming ties with Beijing, including from fellow senior clerics.

Also outside the court, Zen noted the concern overseas but insisted he was acting in his role as a humanitarian, not a cardinal, adding that “Hong Kong has not seen any damage to its religious freedom”.

Zen’s group acted as trustees and secretary of the now-defunct “612 Humanitarian Relief Fund”, which helped pay legal and medical costs for people arrested during the 2019 unrest.

The fund disbanded last October after national security police demanded it hand over operational details, including information about its donors and beneficiaries.

Prosecutors revealed in court that the fund had raised as much as HK\$270 million from more than 100,000 separate donations.

They said “part of the fund was used for political activities and non-charity events”, including donations to protest groups and activists overseas.

The defence argued that the fund was “merely a name given to a sum of money” and the defendants did not form any society.

It also challenged the law’s vagueness, saying it imposed disproportionate restrictions on the freedom of association.

“The criminalisation for failure to register is undoubtedly a curb on these important freedoms for civil society,” defence counsel Gladys Li said.



AFP

CHINESE, INDIAN TROOPS INJURED IN FRESH BORDER 'FACE-OFF'

Indian and Chinese troops engaged in a fresh “face-off” on their disputed Himalayan border last week, leaving several injured on both sides, sources said Monday.

Relations have been at rock-bottom between the nuclear-armed Asian giants since a clash that left 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese troops dead on their high-altitude frontier in June 2020.

The new incident on December 9, which followed recent joint US-India military exercises near the border, led to “minor injuries to (a) few personnel from both sides”, one source said.

Another source, from the Indian army, said at least six Indian soldiers were hurt.

China was yet to comment officially.

Chinese soldiers came close to the area near the Line of Actual Control -- the de facto border -- where it had been agreed that neither side would patrol, the sources said.

This move was “contested by... (Indian) troops in a firm and resolute manner”, the first source said.

After the skirmish both sides “immediately disengaged from the area”, the source added.

An Indian commander later held a meeting with a Chinese counterpart “to discuss the issue in accordance with structured mechanisms to restore peace and tranquility”.

The incident took place in the Tawang Sector of the northeastern Indian state Arunachal Pradesh, all of which is claimed by China. Beijing refers to the area as South Tibet.

The first source said that there are “areas of differing perception, wherein both sides patrol the area up to their claim lines. This has been the trend since 2006.”

Indian media reports quoted unnamed sources as saying that the incident involved around 300 members of China’s People’s Liberation Army, and that China suffered a greater number of injuries.



US-India exercises

Since the deadly hand-to-hand battle in 2020, both sides have sent thousands of troops to bolster the border. Multiple rounds of talks have failed to substantially ease tensions. The army source said there was another “face-off” between Indian and Chinese troops in the last week of November in the Demchok region of Ladakh, further to the north.

It was unclear if there were any injuries resulting from that incident, which was the first since September 2020.

The army source said that there has been increased activity in Ladakh by the Chinese military, as well as a “possible” airspace violation by the Chinese air force in the same area.

This follows joint military exercises which irked Beijing last month between

India and the United States in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand, which borders China. The Chinese soldiers also displayed a banner objecting to the Indo-US military exercises, the source said.

Undefined border

China and India fought a war in 1962 over their long and disputed border. The exact path of the border, some of which is more than 4,000 metres (13,100 feet) above sea level, has never been demarcated. Winter temperatures can plunge below minus 30 Celsius (minus 22 Fahrenheit), cracking gun barrels and seizing up machinery.

Even before the June 2020 clash, India was moving strategically closer to the West, deepening security cooperation with the United States, Japan and Australia in the Asia-Pacific region.

United by their concern about China’s increasing

influence in the region, together they make up the so-called Quad alliance.

India has also embarked on a \$130-billion modernisation of its armed forces -- including ordering attack helicopters from the United States and a missile defence system from Russia.

In the aftermath of the 2020 clash, India banned hundreds of mobile applications of Chinese origin, including the popular social media platform TikTok.

Chinese firms operating in India, including cellphone maker Xiaomi and Huawei, have been raided by the tax authorities.

Bilateral trade remains brisk, however, at around \$100 billion per year, but with India importing from China far more than it exports there.

AFP



INDIA'S ADANI DEFENDS MEDIA BID AFTER PRESS FREEDOM FEARS



Protest against Adani in Australia.
Photo; EPA

India's Adani defends media bid after press freedom fears

Indian tycoon Gautam Adani said that media should have the "courage" to support the government when warranted, after his hostile takeover bid for one of the country's top broadcasters sparked press freedom fears.

Adani, 60, is the world's third-richest person, with an estimated net worth of \$134 billion and interests ranging from Australian coal mines to India's busiest ports.

He is also seen as a close acolyte of Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi, often publicly supporting his policies.

A company from his Adani Group revealed in August that it had indirectly bought 29 percent of NDTV, against the wishes of the broadcaster's management, and is moving to buy a majority stake next month.

In a wide-ranging interview

with the Financial Times, Adani said his foray into media was a "responsibility" rather than a business opportunity.

He added that it was time for India to have a global news conglomerate on par with Al Jazeera and said the channel should support the government when appropriate.

"Independence means if government has done something wrong, you say it's wrong," Adani told the British broadsheet.

"But at the same time, you should have courage when the government is doing the right thing every day. You have to also say that."

NDTV's two channels, one in Hindi and one in English, stand out among India's myriad rolling news broadcasters for inviting on critics of the government as well as their hard-hitting reporting. It has already been hit by a slew of legal cases that its owners said were a result of its reporting.

Under Modi, India has slipped 10 places in the Reporters Without Borders global press freedom ranking and is now 150 out of 180 surveyed countries. Critical reporters often find themselves behind bars and hounded on social media by supporters of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Aggressive expansion

Self-made billionaire Adani, 60, this year overtook fellow Indian Mukesh Ambani to become Asia's richest man.

Like Modi, Adani hails from western Gujarat state, and his conglomerate has expanded aggressively in recent years, including into new areas like airports and renewable energy.

But its growth into capital-intensive businesses has raised alarm, with analysts from Fitch Group's CreditSights warning in August that the group was "deeply overleveraged".

On Friday, the group's Adani Enterprises approved plans to raise \$2.45 billion through a follow-on public offer -- set to be India's biggest ever, subject to regulatory approval.

The fresh funds will be key to reducing debt and fueling further business expansion for the flagship entity, shares in which have surged nearly 1,000 percent over the past two years.

AFP

OPPOSITION LEADER ANWAR NAMED MALAYSIA PM

Malaysia's perennial opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim was named prime minister last week, ending a days-long political impasse after inconclusive polls. His ascension - making him the country's fourth leader in as many years - caps a turbulent political life for Anwar, during which he served jail time on corruption and sodomy charges.

"After taking into consideration the views of Their Royal Highnesses the Malay Rulers, His Majesty has given consent to appoint Anwar Ibrahim as the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia," read a statement from the royal palace. The 75-year-old reformist leader was sworn-in at 5 pm. At the weekend election, Anwar's Pakatan Harapan coalition won the most seats, 82, on an anti-graft message - but fell short of the required 112-seat majority. Former prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin's Perikatan Nasional (National Alliance) bloc had grabbed 73.

Muhyiddin, who was backed by an Islamist party, told reporters Tuesday that since no bloc had enough numbers, the king had initially asked him and Anwar to form a "unity government".

Malaysia's king, Sultan Abdullah Ahmad Shah, had summoned the two rivals in a bid to break the deadlock.

Rollercoaster journey

For Anwar, the premiership is the culmination of a rollercoaster 25 years. The firebrand former

student activist was close to power in the late 1990s, as finance minister and deputy prime minister to Mahathir Mohamad. But the two had a bitter falling out over how to handle the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis.

Mahathir sacked Anwar, who was also expelled from their then party the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), and charged with corruption and sodomy - the latter a crime in the largely Islamic nation. He was sentenced to six years in jail for corruption in 1999, with an additional nine years

bringing despair and hope, progress and regress to the country's polity", according to Oh Ei Sun of the Pacific Research Center of Malaysia.

The Malaysian Supreme Court overturned Anwar's sodomy conviction in 2004 and ordered him freed.

Anwar allied with Mahathir during the 2018 elections, when his erstwhile tormentor came out of retirement to challenge incumbent Najib Razak, who was mired in the billion-dollar 1MDB financial scandal. Their alliance scored a historic



Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim.
Photo: EPA

added for the sodomy charge the following year, the two sentences to run consecutively.

As Anwar claimed political persecution, street protests erupted and evolved into a movement calling for democratic reforms. The Mahathir-Anwar tussle has dominated and shaped Malaysian politics over the past four decades, "alternately

victory against UMNO and Najib, who is now serving a 12-year jail term for corruption.

Mahathir became prime minister for the second time, with an agreement to hand over the premiership to Anwar later. He never fulfilled that pact, and their alliance collapsed after 22 months, leaving Anwar empty-handed again.

AFP

MORE THAN 50,000 MIGRANTS 'DIE IN SEARCH OF BETTER LIFE'

After risking their lives on dangerous journeys, more than 50,000 migrants are known to have died worldwide since 2014, the UN migration agency, IOM, said last week.

The tragic milestone was confirmed in a new report from the International Organization for Migration's Missing Migrants Project, which also maintains that little action had been taken by any country of origin, transit or arrival.

"While thousands of deaths have been documented across migration routes each year, very little has been done to address the consequences of these tragedies, let alone prevent them," said Julia Black, co-author of the study.

Drawing a blank

The nationality for over 30,000 people in the Missing Migrants Project is unknown, which means that more than 60 per cent of those who die on migratory routes remain unidentified. Thousands of families are left "searching for answers", IOM said.

"As time goes by, there is no news", IOM said, quoting a Moroccan migrant in Spain in 2021 who was searching for his brother who disappeared 20 years ago on route to Europe.

Of the missing migrants whose nationality could be identified, more than 9,000 were from Africa, over 6,500 from Asia and another 3,000 from the Americas.

"Notably, the top three countries of origin – Afghanistan, Syria and Myanmar – are marked by violence, with many people fleeing their homes to seek refuge abroad", IOM said.

Deadly legacies

More than half of the 50,000 individual deaths documented occurred on routes to and within Europe, with Mediterranean routes claiming at least 25,104 lives.

European routes also make up the largest number and proportion of missing and presumed dead migrants, with at least 16,032 recorded missing at sea and whose remains have never been recovered.



UK coastguard vessels brings illegal migrants to shore. Photo: EPA



Africa is the second-deadliest region for people on the move, with more than 9,000 migration-related deaths documented since 2014. Regional household surveys indicate that these figures are almost certainly a vast undercount.

Dangerous routes

And in the Americas, nearly 7,000 deaths have been documented, 4,694 of whom were heading to the United States. The US-Mexico land border crossing alone has seen more than 4,000 deaths since 2014.

IOM has also documented another 6,200 deaths across Asia.

“Children make up more than 11 per cent of the lives lost on migratory routes in Asia, the highest proportion of any region”, according to the report.

It noted that of the 717 recorded child deaths linked to migration in the region, 436 were Rohingya refugees.

In Western Asia, at least 1,315 lives have been lost on migratory routes, many of which occurred in countries with ongoing conflicts, which make documentation of the missing extremely challenging.

At least 522 people arriving from the Horn of Africa have died in Yemen – often victims of violence – and 264 Syrian deaths have been documented during attempts to cross the Türkiye border.

Action call

IOM stressed that “obligations under international law, including the right to life, must be upheld at all times”.

The UN agency called for international solidarity in prioritizing search and rescue operations; improving and expanding regular and safe migration pathways; and ensuring that legislation prioritizes the protection and safety of people on the move.

“Regardless of the reasons that compel or drive people to move, no one deserves to die in search of a better life”, said IOM’s Ms. Black.

Courtesy of UN News

MYANMAR CRISIS: RIGHTS EXPERT URGES KOREA TO PLAY 'ENHANCED LEADERSHIP ROLE'

Concluding a six-day official visit to the Republic of Korea (ROK), a UN-appointed independent human rights expert urged the country to help reverse the international community's failure to address the crisis in Myanmar by taking the regional lead in ending violence against civilians there.

"The Republic of Korea can play a vital leadership role in denying the Myanmar junta the means to continue holding 54 million people hostage while becoming a leader in providing humanitarian support to those in desperate need", said Tom Andrews, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, in a recent statement.

'Lead by example'

He urged the Government of South Korea to build on the positive steps it has taken, including publicly denouncing the coup, imposing an arms embargo, and issuing a moratorium on forced returns of Myanmar nationals back to their country.

"The ROK can lead by example to prevent Myanmar nationals from being forcibly returned to Myanmar from other countries", said the Special Rapporteur, adding that given the brutal violence perpetrated by the junta, "no country should force anyone back to Myanmar".

"The ROK has established an unambiguous policy that protects people from being forced back to Myanmar. It should be considered as a model for all countries in the region."

People under siege

Mr. Andrews highlighted ROK's unique position to positively impact the situation in Myanmar.

"Not only is the ROK a strong regional power with a vibrant economy and a member of ASEAN+3, but as I learned in my travels here, the people of the ROK can identify deeply with a people who are under siege and yet are also defiant and committed to undoing the shackles

of a military dictatorship", he said.

"Now it is time for the ROK to build upon the positive steps it has taken and transform its political support and empathy for Myanmar into even stronger action".

Stepping up support

The Special Rapporteur also made several suggestions, including that ROK "denounce the fraudulent elections" that the junta is planning for next year, impose economic sanctions on key economic targets associated with the junta, and expand upon its humane treatment of Myanmar nationals residing in the ROK while encouraging



Myanmar's neighbours to "do the same".

While the humanitarian visa programme allows Myanmar nationals with valid visas in the ROK to legally extend their stay and have access to employment, he urged the Government to "deepen these efforts by ensuring that all persons from Myanmar residing in the ROK, including irregular migrants, can regularize their status, to avoid exploitation and abuse".

Travels within

During his visit, Andrews met government officials, civil society and human rights representatives, major Korean business leaders with operations in Myanmar and ethnic groups in the country.

The independent expert travelled to the city of Gwangju, where he visited memorial sites of the May 18 Revolution and met with members

of the Gwangju Myanmar solidarity movement.

Mr. Andrews, like all Special Rapporteurs, was appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or country situation. His position is honorary and he is not paid for his work.

Courtesy of UN News



Photo: UN News



Photo: Vlada

CHIN STATE

Chin resistance group claims 37 junta soldiers killed over three months. The Chin National Defense Force (CNDF) claim resistance forces were involved in 12 clashes in the three months from September to November in Phalan Township of Chin State and Kalay Township of Sagaing Region, resulting in the death of 37 junta personnel. In a recent statement, the CNDF said eight days of fighting from 15 to 23 November in Theebwar village resulted in the death of 26 junta soldiers and the injury of a PDF member. The statement said that in total the fighting between September and November saw a total of 37 Military Council personnel killed and the wounding of five members of the joint defence forces. “There were 37 junta soldiers who died due to the great effort and fighting skill of the joint defense forces,” CNDF spokesperson Salai Cung Ngai told Mizzima. In addition, it is also said that three houses in Theebwar village were burnt due to the heavy artillery fired by the Military Council. The attack was jointly carried out by the ZFU/PDF-Zoland, Chin Defense Force Siyin, CJDC, MEDF and CDF-KKG. The Chin National Defense Force (CNDF) was formed on 13 April 2021. Since the establishment of the CNO/CNDF, battles with the Military Council have seen 24 heroes lose their lives for the country and the people, and 16 CNDF members have lost their limbs, according to a member of the CNDF.

CHIN/ RAKHINE STATE

Kaladan River re-opened to river traffic between Paletwa and Kyauktaw. The Kaladan River between Paletwa in Chin State and Kyauktaw in Rakhine State re-opened to river traffic on 3 December, following the agreement of a ceasefire between the Myanmar junta and the Arakan Army (AA) on 26 November. The state-owned Yay Nayar 1 ferry has again begun to transport goods between Paletwa and Kyauktaw for the first time since August this year. Previously, in August 2022, the junta blocked all the roads and waterways between Paletwa and Kyauktaw, cutting them off from each other. Paletwa normally relies on the river to bring in food and supplies, with much of the food in Paletwa coming by river from Kyauktaw. A Paletwa resident said: “The Yay Na Yar 1 was loaded with rice and went from Kyauktaw to Paletwa, I saw it. It will currently run twice a week. So, the Kyauktaw-Paletwa [river] route is open again. It will be convenient for local residents. I am praying it does not shut again.”

KARENNI STATE

Fighting between KNDF and Myanmar junta in Karenni State’s Demoso Township. Myanmar junta soldiers fought with the Karenni Nationalities Defense Forces (KNDF) almost all day on 3 December in Daw Ka Mee Village in Karenni State’s Demoso Township. The fighting started at about 9:30 a.m. when the junta soldiers launched an offensive against Daw Ka Mee Village. During the fighting 20 junta soldiers died, four were arrested and military equipment was seized, according to a statement by the KNDF. The statement said that one junta sergeant, two corporals and a private were captured and amongst the confiscated equipment there were Four MA-1 assault rifles, two MA-3 assault rifles, one M79 grenade launcher, one MG-3 machine gun, one RPG, two 60 mm mortar shells, a laptop, some phones, and ammunition. Following the fighting, the junta field artillery regiment based in Demoso fired heavy artillery into the area of Daw Ka Mee Village at about 6:00 p.m. on 3 December and fighter jets bombed the area three times at about 9:00 p.m. The KNDF is warning people not to travel to the areas of Daw Ka Mee Village and nearby Thaysulae Village because the situation is tense and fighting may erupt at any time.



Photo: Hong Sar for Mizzima

TWO JOURNALISTS ATTENDING JUNTA'S PRESS CONFERENCE ARRESTED AFTER THE EVENT: RFA

Two journalists who attended the Burmese junta's press conference held in Nay Pyi Taw November 18 were arrested shortly after the event, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported citing sources in Nay Pyi Taw.

A source who did not want to be named due to security reasons told RFA that NHP News journalist Win Oo and Tae Pyaw news agency's editor-in-chief Zaw Min Oo were arrested shortly after the press conference. It is still unknown whether the two journalists are still being detained or have been released.

Win Oo demanded the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all journalists during the press conference, the source told RFA.

The junta had yet to issue any news regarding the arrest of the two journalists.

The junta usually holds regular monthly press conferences in Nay Pyi Taw.

ANZ WILL BECOME FIRST INTERNATIONAL BANK TO WITHDRAW FROM MYANMAR

The Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited (ANZ) said it will withdraw from Myanmar by early 2023, making it the first international bank to withdraw from the country.

The withdrawal follows the October 2022 blacklisting of Myanmar by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog.

In a statement ANZ said: “Due to increasing operational complexity over the past several months, the

Bank has been working with its Institutional customers to transition to alternative banking arrangements.”

ANZ Managing Director, International, Simon Ireland said: “The decision follows careful consideration of the local operating conditions. We thank the team for working tirelessly to support our customers during this time.

“Our international network and supporting the trade and capital flows of our customers around the region is a critical part of our strategy,

and will continue to be for the long term,” Mr Ireland said.

According to ANZ it has operated in Myanmar since 2015, and had a small local team focused on supporting the onshore and cross-border needs of multinational companies, which included services such as facilitating payroll.

According to the campaign group Justice for Myanmar Australia’s ANZ was one of the first international banks to receive a licence from the Central Bank of Myanmar,



Photo: AFP

winning approval in 2014, under the military's proxy government.

Since US, UK, EU and Canada sanctioned Innwa Bank in March 2021, the Hong Kong-based insurance corporation AIA has used ANZ to transfer funds to Innwa Bank accounts. Records show transactions in August and September 2021.

The Malaysian mobile network tower company Edotco also used ANZ for transactions to Innwa Bank accounts in April and June 2021. Edotco leases towers to Mytel, a mobile operator partly owned by Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC), a holding company that owns businesses, that generate revenue for the military, including Innwa Bank. MEC was also sanctioned by the the US, UK, EU and Canada following the coup.

According to Justice for Myanmar, ANZ's transactions with Innwa Bank took place amid a sanctions void in Australia, with the government failing to impose any sanctions in response to the military's coup.

Military conglomerates MEC and Myanma Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL) remain unsanctioned in Australia, despite being sanctioned by the US, UK, EU and Canada.

Justice For Myanmar previously wrote to ANZ regarding its transactions with Innwa Bank. A spokesperson responded, "We are monitoring the situation in Myanmar closely and our priority is ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our staff. ANZ must comply with all applicable laws in all of the jurisdictions in which it operates, including requirements of supra-national organisations, such as the United Nations and European Union."

Justice For Myanmar also asked ANZ whether it transacted with MWD, a bank owned by MEHL. ANZ did not provide a response.

Regarding ANZ's withdrawal from Myanmar Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung said: "We cautiously welcome ANZ's decision to leave Myanmar and call on them to responsibly exit.

"This must involve mitigating and remedying the impact on their staff and ensuring that they repatriate all funds so they do not leave a windfall for the terrorist military junta.

"Since the military's illegal attempted coup, ANZ has transacted with the US, UK and EU sanctioned Innwa Bank and facilitated customer payments

to the military junta, enabled by the refusal of the Australian government to sanction the junta and its businesses.

"The Australian government's appalling inaction in response to the crisis in Myanmar undermines its democratic values and international obligations.

"We call on the Australian government to support the people of Myanmar and take a clear stand for democracy and human rights by sanctioning the illegal junta and its businesses.

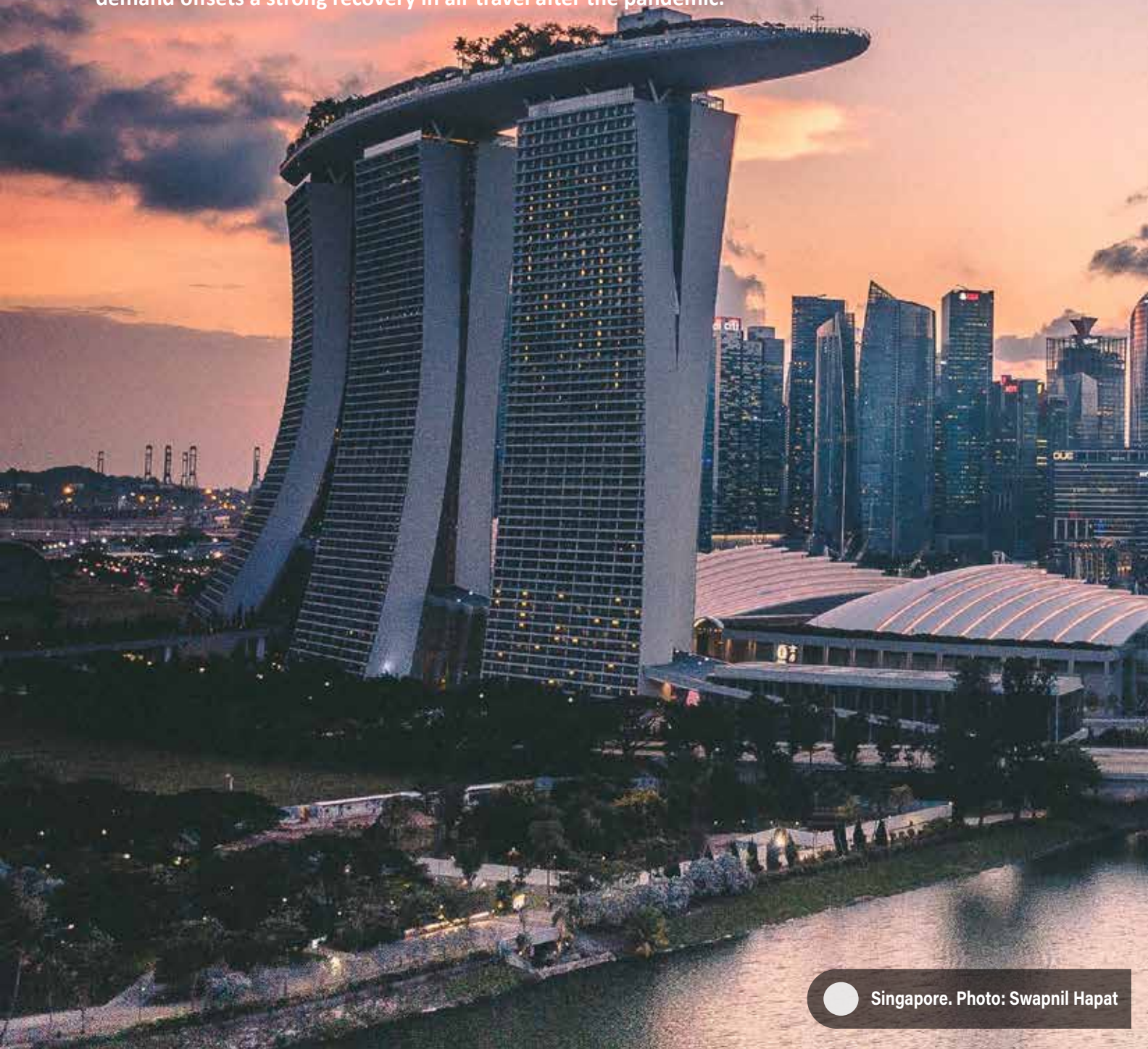
"ANZ is the first international bank to leave Myanmar and their planned exit is another sign of the destruction the junta is causing to Myanmar's economy through the military's coup attempt, war of terror and proliferation of illicit business activities under control of or profiting the military and its associates."

SINGAPORE WARNS SLOWER ECONOMIC GROWTH IN 2023

Singapore warned last week that economic growth could slow to a trickle next year owing to weakness in key export markets including the United States, Europe and China, as rising interest rates and the Ukraine war cause headwinds.

The city-state's economic performance is often seen as a useful barometer of the global environment because of its reliance on trade with the rest of the world.

The trade ministry said it expected growth to come in at 3.5 percent this year -- inside its forecasts for 3-4 percent -- but then drop sharply in 2023 to just 0.5-2.5 percent as weaker global demand offsets a strong recovery in air travel after the pandemic.



Singapore. Photo: Swapnil Hapat

Officials warned that “significant uncertainties and downside risks in the global economy remain” including the war in Ukraine and central bank moves to fight decades-high inflation with multiple interest rate hikes.

“Singapore’s external demand outlook has softened further due to the weaker outlook for the eurozone economy amidst an energy crunch, as well as for China as it continues to grapple with recurring Covid-19 outbreaks and a property market downturn,” the ministry said.

China is the only major economy still attempting to stamp out the domestic spread of the virus, and a fresh outbreak has seen authorities impose strict containment measures such as shutting down parts of cities and placing contacts of infected patients into strict quarantine.

A series of new rules announced by Beijing earlier this month appeared to signal a shift away from its controversial zero-Covid strategy but the latest flare-up and the first deaths in months have sparked fears of another harsh clampdown.

Singapore’s trade ministry said Wednesday: “Growth rates in most major economies are expected to moderate further from 2022 levels, with sharp slowdowns projected in the US and eurozone.

“Global supply disruptions are likely to continue into 2023 as the war in Ukraine drags on, even though the extent and frequency of disruptions is expected to ease.”





Photo: AFP

RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT COMPANY TO INVEST IN MYANMAR HYDRO, WIND AND NUCLEAR POWER

The Rosatom Nuclear Power Company, which is owned by the Russian government, is interested in investing in wind turbines and hydropower generation in Myanmar, according to the junta Minister for Electricity, Thaung Han.

The comment was made whilst the minister was in Russia touring the small Barsuchkovskaya hydropower plant and the Stavropol Region and Kochubeeskaya WPP wind turbine power station, on 19 November, according to a statement.

Previously, in early September, whilst attending the 2022 Far East Economic Forum, the junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, signed an agreement with Rosatom for the company to build small nuclear reactors for power generation in Myanmar.

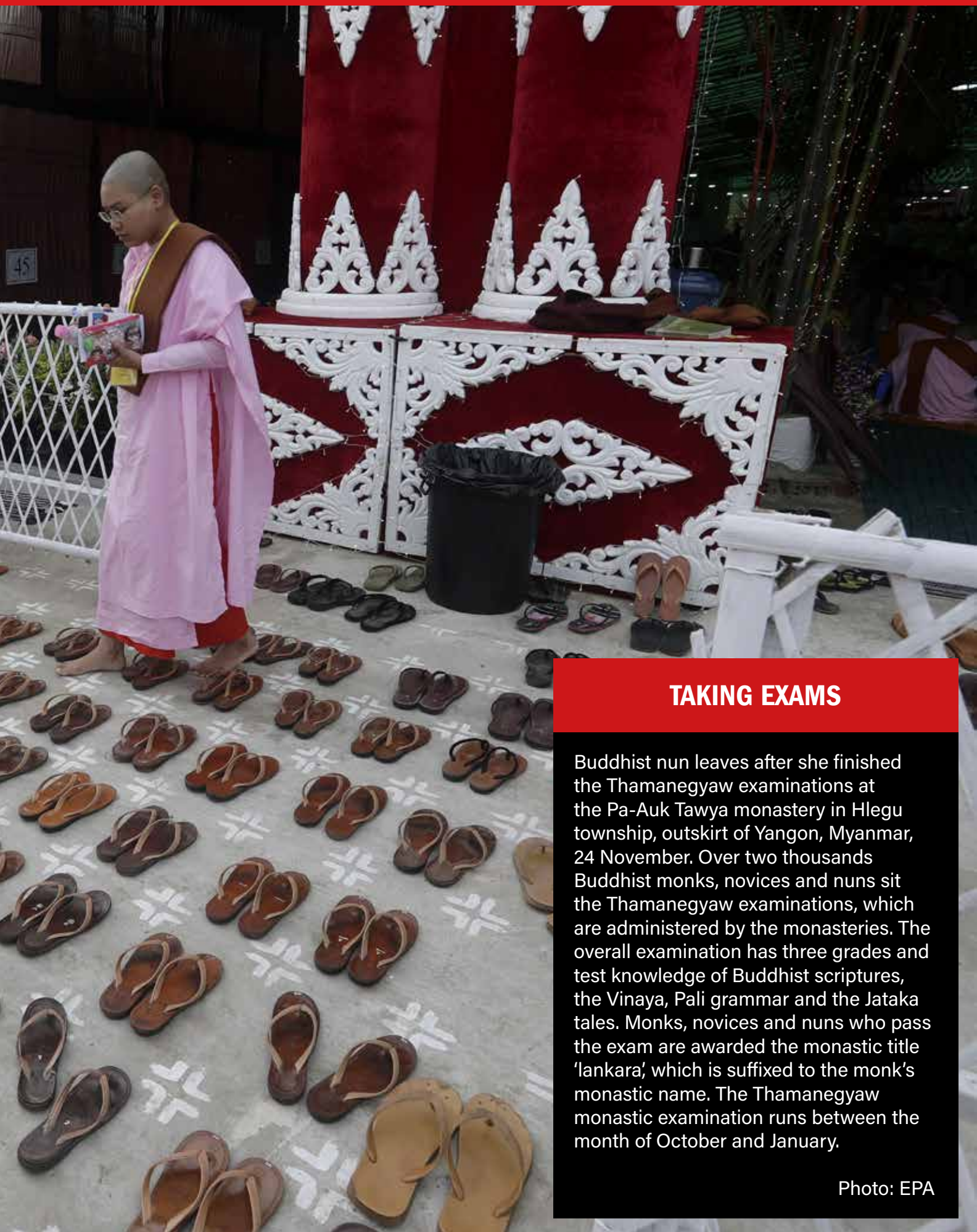
In a press conference on 20 September, Min Aung Hlaing said that a nuclear reactor would be built in Myanmar next year.

Penrose Thitsa

Myanmar's energy sector earns most foreign income

Myanmar's military junta continues to receive huge foreign income through the energy sector, according to a report published by independent group Institute for Strategy and Policy – Myanmar (ISP-Myanmar). From February 2021 to 30 October 2022, the military junta received the majority of foreign income from the energy sector, said ISP-Myanmar. During that period, the value of foreign investment that entered Myanmar's energy sector was more than US\$3.8 billion, which is about 68 percent of the total amount of foreign investment. On a monthly basis, May 2021 recorded the highest amount of investment with more than US\$ 2.5 billion, said the report. Since the coup in February 2021, up to 98 new investment businesses were launched by 30 September 2022. As Myanmar's junta is committing massive human rights violations, Myanmar's oppositions do not want foreign investments to come into Myanmar because they don't want the junta to earn foreign income.





TAKING EXAMS

Buddhist nun leaves after she finished the Thamanegyaw examinations at the Pa-Auk Tawya monastery in Hlegu township, outskirt of Yangon, Myanmar, 24 November. Over two thousands Buddhist monks, novices and nuns sit the Thamanegyaw examinations, which are administered by the monasteries. The overall examination has three grades and test knowledge of Buddhist scriptures, the Vinaya, Pali grammar and the Jataka tales. Monks, novices and nuns who pass the exam are awarded the monastic title 'lankara', which is suffixed to the monk's monastic name. The Thamanegyaw monastic examination runs between the month of October and January.

Photo: EPA

Aung La N Sang came through with a massive finish of contender Yushin Okami in the very first round of the ONE Championship 163 mixed martial arts event in Singapore on 19 November.

As the South China Morning Post put it, Aung La N Sang felt the love in Singapore, and returned the favour as he came back to fight in front of a live crowd for the first time in more than three years.

“The Burmese Python” blew the roof off Singapore Indoor Stadium with a first-round TKO of Japanese veteran Yushin Okami at Saturday night’s ONE Championship 163 event, the Post reports.

They chanted his name endlessly, and he clearly enjoyed himself, taking selfies with fans on his way out of the cage.

“We have to savour every moment – this could be my last walk in the cage, my last time seeing the fans,” Aung La N Sang told the Post.

His comment was a reference to the tragic death of his friend and training partner Anthony “Rumble” Johnson last week at 38. Aung La N Sang held up a framed picture of the former UFC light heavyweight title challenger in the ONE Circle after his victory.

AUNG LA N SANG SMASHES IT IN LATEST ONE CHAMPIONSHIP



● Aung La N Sang greets fans. Photo: ONE Championship

Myanmar fans from around the world, and at the event, cheered on their hero. Arguably, Aung La N Sang is the most famous athlete in Myanmar, with a legion of fans that follow his every word and move, the Florida-based N Sang has not been able to visit his home country since the military coup in February 2021.

In an interview, he called on Myanmar fans to be strong during these difficult times.

“Be united, stay strong, don’t ever give up,” he said.



Aung La N Sang floors Yushin Okami.
Photo: ONE Championship





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